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Why Not Me?

By Danielle Barnard



Valerie Sigamani

▲ Danielle Barnard

IT WAS A QUIET SABBATH MORNING. The sun poured through my window and filled my living room like the friend whose personality just takes up extra space. I sat on my couch, feet resting on the colorful ottoman in front of me, Bible open on the seat to my right, pen twirling through my fingers as I read these words:

“Vocation does not come from a voice ‘out there’ calling me to become something I am not. It comes from a voice ‘in here’ calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God...”

There is a Hasidic tale that reveals, with amazing brevity, both the universal tendency to want to be someone else and the ultimate importance of

becoming one’s self. Rabbi Zuysa, when he was an old man, said, “In the coming world, they will not ask me, ‘Why were you not Moses?’ They will ask me, ‘Why were you not Zuysa?’ ”

Sitting on my couch on that warm, quiet Sabbath morning, that final question rang through my mind, “Why were you not Danielle?” It was at that moment I realized my true answer to the question: “How do you know you are called?”

In previous years, my answer would have been a long story, starting with a dream God gave me when I was eight years old, then having the same exact dream years later at the age of 17. In previous years, my answer would have included preaching my very first sermon at twelve and spending lots of time involved in church as a kid. In previous years, my answer would have included all of the affirmation I received from others concerning this call to full-time ministry.

But, now, having read these life-changing words from Parker J. Palmer, I know I am called because “Pastor” is not a title I receive as part of a job, but pastor is who I am. Whether I am an office coordinator at a nonprofit, bringing peace and light in every interaction with a coworker, or preaching in a pulpit on Sabbath and visiting members in the hospital — I am a pastor because my life says so. I am called to ministry because to do otherwise would be untrue to myself. I know I am called because I allow my life to speak every day and daily it tells me, “You are right where you should be.”

Danielle Barnard is a second-year MDiv student at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. She currently serves as the president of the Black Student Association of the Seminary and as the creative pastor for One Place Fellowship on the campus of Andrews University.